



Brevard County Sheriff's Office
Titusville, Florida

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chief Michael J. Lewis
FROM: Agent Kirk Geweniger, Staff Services Unit
DATE: May 10, 2016
RE: Command Inquiry 2016-CI-007

I. Allegation:

On April 8, 2016, Deputy Michael Nettles, Brevard County Jail Complex, received information pertaining to Corrections Deputy Michelle Knight. The informant alleged that Knight was a possible victim of verbal and physical abuse by a Mr. Matthew Hackney whom Knight was in a relationship with. The caller also advised that Hackney is in and out of jail and the Brevard County Jail Complex and is currently incarcerated for unrelated charges.

On April 8, 2016, Agent Kraig Hupfer and I conducted a recorded interview with Deputy Nettles and details of said interview are as follows: He received a phone call from an individual that identified himself as "Donald Sanders" (it was later determined that the caller was actually [REDACTED]) The caller stated that Matthew Hackney and Corrections Deputy Michelle Knight had met while Hackney was incarcerated at the jail. Shortly after, Hackney and Knight entered into a personal relationship which they have been in for several months. The callers concern was that Hackney had been physically abusing Knight as she confided in him and showed him the bruises allegedly caused by Hackney. The caller stated that Hackney had also damaged Knight's vehicle during an incident between the two of them. The caller indicated he and Hackney have known one another as they are acquaintances and both homeless and frequent the same homeless camps in the Cocoa Beach / Cape Canaveral area. The caller advised he would be willing to meet with someone to discuss the situation in greater detail if needed.

On April 8, 2016, Agent Hupfer and I located, identified and conducted an interview with the complainant [REDACTED] and his wife [REDACTED]. Details of the interview are as follows: [REDACTED] stated he contacted the Sheriff's Office due to

*Concord w/
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concerns he had for the safety of Deputy Michelle Knight as he felt she was a victim of physical violence by her boyfriend, Matthew Hackney. ██████████ stated that when he called the jail, he informed the call taker (Deputy Nettles) that he was an individual by the name of "Donald Sanders" because he wanted to remain anonymous in fear of retaliation by Hackney. ██████████ advised Donald Sanders is an acquaintance of his and Hackney and believed Sanders would also be able to provide information pertaining to Hackney and Knight's relationship as Sanders had been with Knight and Hackney on several occasions.

██████████ stated that he, Hackney, Sanders, and his wife are all homeless and frequent the same camps in the Cocoa Beach / Cape Canaveral area. ██████████ advised he tries to distance himself from Hackney as much as possible due to Hackney being a physically violent individual.

██████████ advised that during several conversations with Knight and Hackney they both indicated that they had met while Hackney was incarcerated at the Brevard County Jail. Upon Hackney's release they were able to continue the relationship. ██████████ stated he and his wife first met Knight, approximately three (3) or four (4) months ago, when they had gone to court in Viera with Hackney and Donald Sanders. They were going to take the bus, but missed it so Hackney called Knight and she was there shortly thereafter and drove all of them to Hackney's court appearance. Knight went into the court house with them and watched Hackney's court appearance. ██████████ stated that on several occasions they would be cooking out at Lori Wilson Park, Cocoa Beach, when Knight and Hackney would show up in Knight's vehicle, a blue/purple Chevrolet Impala.

Hackney had never indicated to them he and Knight were boyfriend/girlfriend because Knight was not his type of girl (referring to Knight's weight). Hackney would frequently call Knight very degrading names in front of them. When Knight was not around, Hackney would tell them he was using Knight for money, rides when needed, and to stay at her home in ██████████ to get off the streets for a couple days at a time. Hackney would just call Knight and she would show up shortly after his call. When Knight had to be at work at 5:00 a.m. he would call her at 1:00 a.m. and she would show up within the next 40 minutes. Hackney would call her when he wanted to get high and/or needed money. ██████████ stated that Knight did not do drugs, but would provide him with money and a ride to get them.

██████████ advised that if Knight did not do what she was told by Hackney, she would suffer by being hit or he would damage her car. On one occasion, both Knight and Hackney described an incident that Hackney needed money and she would not give it to him, so Hackney broke her windshield and passenger side door on her vehicle. ██████████ stated they did not witness the incident, however they later observed the described damage consistent with what they had been told. Knight had told them that her boss at work had noticed the damage to her vehicle and questioned her about the damage.

██████████ advised that on several occasions, Knight would talk to her about the physical abuse that she would endure by Hackney and described being kicked in the stomach and punched. Knight told her that Hackney would never hit her in the face because he knew she would have to go to work and would be questioned about the injuries.

Knight had also informed them that her work could not know about her and Hackney's relationship because he was an inmate at the jail where she works and it is not allowed. On several occasions Hackney and Donald Sanders had stayed with Knight at her home located in ██████████.

On April 10, 2016, Chief Michael J. Lewis authorized a formal administrative investigation be conducted regarding the allegations. Based on the seriousness of the allegations, Chief Lewis also authorized Knight be placed on Administrative Suspension, with pay until such time as a thorough investigation of this matter can be conducted.

II. Possible Policy Violations:

- *General Order 400.00 General Professional Responsibilities*
- *General Order 400.04 Substandard Performance*
- *General Order 400.16 Association with Criminals*
- *General Order 600.01C Facility Code of Ethics*

III. Witnesses:

Donald R. Sanders
Inmate
Brevard County Jail Complex

On April 13, 2016, Agent Kraig Hupfer and I made contact with Mr. Donald Sanders at the Brevard County Jail Complex due to him being incarcerated at the time. I conducted an audio-recorded interview with Mr. Sanders and detail of the interview are as follows:

He is close friends with Mr. Matthew Hackney and has been for the last five months. Within the last three months he had been introduced to one of the two girlfriends of Hackney, Correction's Deputy Michelle Knight. Sanders stated shortly after meeting Knight, he and Hackney had been picked up from the beach by Knight and taken back to her ██████████ home. He and Hackney had stayed at her home on several occasions. Sanders stated he and Knight did not get along, however if she did not allow him to go with Hackney when she came to pick him up, Hackney would not go with her. She would pick them up from Cocoa Beach, stop and get some liquor, and take them back to her house in ██████████ to spend the night with her. (*Sanders accurately described how to get*

to Knight's residence by describing different landmarks and turns) Sanders advised that Knight would buy Hackney anything he wanted and would drive him around whenever and where ever he wanted to go. Sanders stated Hackney had met her while he was incarcerated in the Brevard County Jail Complex and their relationship continued when he was released. Knight had even picked them up from the beach and drove them to the Viera Court for Hackney's court appearances.

Sanders advised that Hackney would use Knight to get what he needed. But, based on the affection, touching, hugging, and rubbing, she showed towards Hackney; it was apparent to him that Knight wanted more from Hackney. Sanders stated that he never witnessed Hackney physically abuse Knight, but he has seen him scream at her.

Sanders stated that Knight told he and Hackney on several occasions that they could not tell anyone about their relationship and being in her house. She was also paranoid about being in public with them afraid someone she worked with would see them.

IV. Additional Investigative Efforts:

An audit of Michelle Knight's BULLET usage was conducted by the IT Unit of the Brevard County Sheriff's Office. The audit indicated Knight's access of the system was between August 5, 2015 and November 27, 2015, there was no access before said dates nor was there any access after said dates due to the system being replaced by the New World database. This audit revealed that Knight had accessed records pertaining to Matthew Hackney on ten (10) separate dates for a total of fifty-eight (58) inquires.

An audit of Michelle Knight's New World database usage was conducted by the IT Unit of the Brevard County Sheriff's Office. The audit indicated Knight's access of the system was between March 15, 2015 and April 9, 2016. There was no access before said dates nor was there any access after said dates (from March to November there was an overlap of the two databases for the integration process). This audit revealed that Knight had accessed records pertaining to Matthew Hackney on fifty-six (56) separate dates for a total of four hundred sixty-one (461) inquires.

Using the "Supervisor's Daily Reports" and payroll information I verified that Knight was in fact working on the dates the inquiries were made. I also verified that Knight's duty assignments (location) corresponded with the work stations that were used under Knight's login to access Hackney's information.

On April 12, 2016, I conducted an audit of Knight's DMS history. This audit confirmed Knight had in fact accessed and signed the documents indicating she had read and understood the Policies and Procedures relating to the allegations in this investigation.

I obtained a copy of Hackneys criminal history report that indicated as of July 26, 2005, he had been charged with one hundred thirty-two (132) misdemeanors, thirty-two (32) of which resulted in convictions, three (3) Failure to Appear charges, and one (1) felony conviction; all indicating Hackney is a criminal and was a criminal prior to and during Knight's relationship with hackney. This information coupled with Knight's duty assignments and search inquires, Knight knew or should have known Hackney's criminal history.

V. Subject Officer

Michelle Knight
Deputy, Jail Complex
Brevard County Sheriff's Office

On April 12, 2016, Agent Kraig Hupfer made contact with Michelle Knight and provided her with a "Notice of Administrative Investigation" and "Administrative Suspension / With Pay" notification. Hupfer explained the allegations and informed Knight she had the option to contact a representative of her choice if she desired to have one with her during her interview. Hupfer advised he would be in contact with her as soon as a date was decided for her interview.

On April 15, 2016, at 1300 hours, Knight arrived at the office with Al Boettjer from the Coastal Florida PBA as her representative. Prior to the sworn audio-recorded interview, Knight and her representative reviewed the investigative file to include all audio files. Details of her sworn audio-recorded interview are as follows:

Knight stated she has known Mr. Matthew Hackney since November of 2015, as she met him while walking on the beach near the Cocoa Beach pier. He walked with her to her vehicle and she left without exchanging any information with him. A week or two later, she was walking on the beach and again ran into Hackney. They talked for a bit and she provided him with her phone number. From that point forward, Hackney would call her and they would see each other every week or every other week. She thought Hackney had a job, however they never discussed what he did for a living. At some point, she told him that she was employed and what she did for a living. In mid-December she met Hackney at the beach and was introduced to [REDACTED]. They continued to all hang out till late December. On a few occasions, she had been with the [REDACTED] without Hackney present. Knight stated when they were all together, she would talk to Regina normally because they were women and had more in common to discuss. In January 2016, Hackney introduced her to Donald 'Donnie' Sanders.

Knight was asked if she had ever driven Hackney, Sanders, and the [REDACTED] in her vehicle and knight responded that; on different occasions, she would drive Hackney and

the [REDACTED] to various locations, but never Sanders. Knight advised that Hackney had been to her house on two occasions, the first was when she and Hackney drove to her house so she could change her clothing and the second was when someone dropped Hackney and Sanders off at her home. The second time, she did not let them in the house because they were drinking so she made them stay outside. Knight stated that Sanders was lying as to how many times (6-7) he had been to her home. Knight advised that neither Hackney nor Sanders stayed the night at her home.

Knight stated at no time did she give Hackney any money and the only reason the others are saying that is because no one likes Hackney.

Knight advised that Hackney had never been physically or verbally abusive towards her and everyone was lying.

Knight advised she had never bonded Hackney out of jail nor had she ever provide money to someone else to bond Hackney out of jail. Knight denied that she ever provided Hackney with a ride to or from court.

Knight was confronted with the audit of her Bullet and New World database access as it pertained to the hundreds of inquiries of Hackney, dating back to March of 2015. Knight stated that she did not recall looking up Hackney's name prior to January 2016, and alleged someone else must have used her computer to look him up as there were several times she walked away from her terminal. (412 inquiries were made under Knight's log-in prior to January 2016). Knight stated she did not learn Hackney's last name until January 2016 and that is when she utilized the database to look up his criminal history. Knight denied accessing Hackney's information prior to January 2016. Knight advised that after learning of Hackney's criminal history, she discontinued her contact with him. Knight stated that she knew she was not able to associate with persons with a criminal history due to her job, so that is why she conducted the searches after learning his last name. After January however, she continued accessing Hackney's information to insure if he was in jail that she would not have contact with him. Knight conducted searches of Hackney's information on ten (10) of the thirty-seven (37) separate dates she worked from January to April. Of the ten separate searches she conducted, three (3) of them were while she was assigned to the female facility where she would have had no chance of having contact with Hackney.

On April 8, 2016, two monitored calls were made from Hackney to his mother. During the first call Hackney stated: "I seen you know who, but I don't know, did you talk to her?" Mother: "I talked with her this morning and she said she would call her back that evening. You know when you called me at 3:58, I called her and she didn't seem to know anything and can't do anything for you." During the call Hackney and his mother were cautious not to identify who they were talking about due to the call monitoring. Hackney's mother told him that she made contact with the female and would call her back later that afternoon. During the second call, the mother again attempted to make

contact with the female by means of a three-way call. The call was successful and during the recorded conversation, Hackney and the female discuss him needing to be bonded out of jail and his need for her to contact a bondsman. After review of the recorded conversation the female voice strongly resembles the voice of Knight. Knight admitted to speaking to Hackney's mother the morning of the 8th at 0400 hours (*near exact time mother stated during the first call to Hackney*) informing her that Hackney may have been in some trouble and requested for her to inquire if in fact Hackney was in trouble. Knight stated she went on the Sheriff's Office public site and looked at the arrests made for that day to verify if Hackney had been arrested. She found that Hackney had been arrested for trespassing and his bond was going to be five-hundred dollars so she passed on the information to his mother. Knight denied ever speaking to Hackney's mother a second time and that she was not the female captured during the three-way call with Hackney and his mother. *New World audit showed nineteen (19) inquires on that date form 0550 hours until 1657 hours.* Knight acknowledged looking at Hackney's information, but only to make sure she was not working where he was being housed; even though she was assigned to Tent 3, which only houses trustees assigned to the chain gangs. When asked why, if Tent 3 was for chain gang only, why would she need to look him up? Knight stated that it was because she wanted to know where he would be in case she had to walk around, she would be able to avoid contact with him.

Knight stated she never drove or accompanied Hackney, Sanders, or the [REDACTED] to any Brevard County Court house for a court appearance. Knight stated that she had attended court on a few occasions at the Viera Court House, but not with or for any of them. Knight stated the reason she went was to improve her court preparation should she have to testify in the future. Knight could not remember what courtroom she went to or when she was there, or what the case involved.

As it pertained to the damage to her vehicle which the [REDACTED] stated was caused by Hackney, Knight denied that Hackney caused the damage. Knight advised the windshield had been damaged by a rock as she was driving on the interstate. And the door had a hinge that rusted and fell off not allowing the door to close properly and that is what she told Sgt. Seeley when he discovered her vehicle damaged in the parking lot of the jail.

Knight stated she was just friends with Hackney, nothing more, and that their relationship ended in January. He has called a few times since, and she told him she did not want to talk to him anymore.

VI. Additional Investigative Interviews:

**Brian Seeley
Sergeant, Jail Complex
Brevard County Sheriff's Office**

On April 19, 2016, Agent Hupfer and I conducted a sworn, audio-recorded interview with Sergeant Brian Seeley. The following is a summary of the interview:

Seeley stated a few months ago, he was contacted about a suspicious vehicle that was parked in the employee parking lot at the rear of the jail complex. The vehicle's front passenger door was partially open, secured with a rope, and the window was down. Seeley stated he recalled walking out to the parking lot to look at the vehicle, with him at the time was Sergeant Greg Davis. The vehicle's front passenger door was as described and the door was severely damaged to the point it wouldn't close. Sgt. Seeley noticed the front windshield was cracked, also on the passenger side. Due to the vehicle being parked where it was and Sgt. Seeley not being familiar with the vehicle a search of the vehicle's tag was conducted which identified the owner of the vehicle to be Michelle Knight. Sgt. Seeley advised Knight worked for him and he was then concerned for her safety, so he called her out to the parking lot. He asked her if she needed help fixing the door so she could safely drive it. At the time it appeared the door had been over extended outward causing a crease towards the front of the door and was then rubbing on the front fender not allowing it to close fully. The windshield was cracked, however it did not appear to be consistent with being hit by a rock.

Seeley had asked her what had happened to her door and window. Knight indicated to him and Davis that there had been an incident involving a "drunk friend" and that the friend had been the person causing the damage to the door. She did not go into great detail about what had occurred and stated she had already contacted her insurance about getting the window fixed.

I played Sgt. Seeley the portion of Knight's subject interview when she described her conversation with him and Davis about the damage to her vehicle. Seeley heard where Knight indicated she had told them her windshield had been hit by a rock on I-95 and her door had been damaged and would not close due to a rusty hinge that had fallen off.

After Sgt. Seeley heard the portion of the interview, he was confident that what she had stated during her interview with Staff Services was not what she had told them that day. Sgt. Seeley stated that he had worked on the door for nearly two hours and all the hinges were intact and in somewhat of a working order. To him, it was obvious the door had been damaged by some form of force and nothing was missing. Knight specifically mentioned the damage occurred during some event that involved her "drunk friend." Sgt. Seeley stated that the information she provided during her interview was untrue as to what she had reported to them on the day of the incident.

Gregory Davis
Sergeant, Jail Complex
Brevard County Sheriff's Office

Following my interview with Sgt. Seeley, Agent Hupfer and I conducted an audio-recorded interview with Sergeant Gregory Davis. Details of Sgt. Davis' interview were consistent with the information Sgt. Seeley's provided during his interview. It was also Sgt. Davis' opinion that the damage to the vehicle (passenger door) was consistent with being opened with great force or forced open and possible could have also cracked the windshield.

I then Played Sgt. Davis the portion of Knight's subject interview when she described the incident in the parking lot with him and Sgt. Seeley. After hearing Knights explanation for the damage to her vehicle, Sgt. Davis advised all the hinges were on the door and had not fallen off as she described. In fact, Sgt. Davis had to install washers to the hinges on the door so they would function properly due to damage, not rust. Sgt. Davis stated he never heard anything relating to a rock striking the windshield causing the damage. Sgt. Davis stated that the information Knight provided during her interview was not true as to what she had told him and Sgt. Seeley on the day of the incident.

VII. Finding of Fact:

On January 8, 2007, Michelle Knight was hired by the Brevard County Sheriff's Office to be a Corrections Technician. She transitioned into a Corrections Deputy position on May 29, 2010.

On October 6, 2015, Knight accessed and signed Policy and Procedure, 600.01C Facility Code of Ethics. By her signing, she acknowledging she had read and understood policy.

On October 11, 2014, Knight accessed and signed Policy and Procedure, 400.00 Professional Standards, to include 400.04 Substandard Performance, 400.16 Associating with Criminals.

Matthew Hackney was arrested and incarcerated at the Brevard County Jail Complex on ten (10) separate dates beginning on April 7, 2014 and continued, almost monthly, until April 8, 2016. His arrest history also contrary what Knight claimed as to when, and how, she met Hackney in November of 2015. Knight stated she had met with Hackney on several occasions from November 2015 thru January 2016 yet Hackney was incarcerated continually from September 15, 2015 until December 3, 2015.

On or about February 2016, Knight's vehicle was found to have damage to it (Windshield and Passenger side door). Witness interviews indicated the damage was caused by Hackney. During the witness interview with [REDACTED] they stated they

had been told by Knight that the damage to her vehicle had been discovered by her boss at work and she had been questioned about the damage. During the interviews with Seeley and Davis, Knight had indicated to them a similar account that would support the claims by the [REDACTED] as the damage to her vehicle was caused during an incident involving a drunk friend. However, during Knight's interview, she indicated the damage to the windshield was due to a rock hitting it and a hinge rusting of her passenger door, a complete contradiction of all the witnesses.

An audit of Michelle Knight's BULLET usage was conducted by the IT Unit of the Brevard County Sheriff's Office. The audit indicated Knight's access of the system was between August 5, 2015 and November 27, 2015, there was no access before said dates nor was there any access after said dates due to the system being replaced by the New World database. This audit revealed that Knight had accessed records pertaining to Matthew Hackney on ten (10) separate dates for a total of fifty-eight (58) inquires.

An audit of Michelle Knight's New World database usage was conducted by the IT Unit of the Brevard County Sheriff's Office. The audit indicated Knight's access of the system was between March 15, 2015 and April 9, 2016. There was no access before said dates nor was there any access after said dates (from March to November there was an overlap of the two databases for the integration process). This audit revealed that Knight had accessed records pertaining to Matthew Hackney on fifty-six (56) separate dates for a total of four hundred sixty-one (461) inquires.

The audits contradict the statements made by Knight during her interview when she stated that she did not have knowledge of Hackney's criminal history prior to ending their relationship in January. However, the New World audit indicated Knight continued to access Hackney's information by conducting twenty-eight (28) separate searches during the months of March and April 2016, all of which were after the time she stated their relationship had ended.

During Knight's interview for this investigation, she made several statements which are in conflict with the statements of other witnesses or of other independent evidence. Knight made several statements throughout her interview that she had no knowledge of Hackney's criminal history and/or him being incarcerated at the time. The audits of the data bases indicated that Knight had made hundreds of inquiries regarding Hackney while he was incarcerated, while she was working, while she was logged in to the computer from where the searches were made, and the supervisor log showed that was where she was assigned that date.

Knight stated during her interview with Staff Services that at no time from November 2015 until April 2016, did she inform any supervision or staff member of her relationship she had with Matthew Hackney.

VIII. Policy Discussion and Recommendations

During this investigation it was found that Knight had developed a relationship with Mr. Matthew Hackney. This relationship resulted in a continued relationship upon his release from the Brevard County Jail Complex. Official records that were obtained from the Brevard County Clerk of Courts reveal that Matthew Hackney was convicted of a felony on February 3, 2005 and he had been arrested for hundreds of misdemeanor charges that resulted in thirty-two (32) convictions. An audit of the PowerDMS system revealed that Knight was aware of the prohibition on associating with criminals as she had reviewed these policies prior to engaging in a relationship with Hackney. Based on these facts, Michelle Knight knew or should have known Matthew Hackney is in fact a criminal.

On April 21, 2016, prior to the conclusion of this investigation, Michelle Knight submitted a letter of resignation to be effective April 21, 2016. The resignation was accepted by Lieutenant Alex Fischback, Staff Services on behalf of Chief Michael J. Lewis.

Based on my investigation detailed in the above findings of fact, I recommend that the allegations against Corrections Deputy Michelle Knight be closed as follows:

- That a violation of *400.00 General Professional Responsibilities* be closed as: **Sustained**
- That a violation of *400.04 Substandard Performance* be closed as: **Sustained**
- That a violation of *400.16 Association with Criminals* be closed as: **Sustained**
- That a violation of *600.01C Facility Code of Ethics* be closed as: **Sustained**

IX. Enclosures:

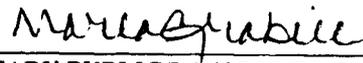
- Memorandum from Chief Mike Lewis to Commander Jimmy Donn authorizing an administrative investigation, dated April 10, 2016
- Notice of Administrative Investigation served to Corrections Deputy Michelle Knight April 12, 2016
- Notice of Administrative Suspension / with pay served to Corrections Deputy Michelle Knight April 12, 2016
- BULLET and New World inquiries/search history of Michelle Knight's usage
- Supervisor Daily Reports / Shift Assignments
- Time Card Audit Report
- Criminal History Report – Matthew Hackney
- Copy of jail calls

X. Oath

I, Agent Kirk Geweniger, do hereby swear, under penalty of perjury, that to the best of my personal knowledge, information, and belief, I have not knowingly or willfully deprived, or allowed another to deprive, the subject of the investigation of any of the rights contained in ss. 112.532 and 112.533, Florida Statutes.

Signed 
Agent Kirk Geweniger, ID 640

Sworn to and subscribed before me, the undersigned authority, and this 12 day of MAY 2016.

Signature 
NOTARY PUBLIC/LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER
IN PERFORMANCE OF OFFICIAL DUTIES

